

Apology

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Summary: It was a little late to atone for what he'd done, and he wondered if it was worth asking for forgiveness.

[Mendez/Naomi][Friendship!][Post Glasslands; Pre Thursday War]

Apology

****Rila:**** I don't even know where this came from...Oh well. I honestly think he's very much a father-figure for the Spartans.

Disclaimer: _I love Mendez. He's awesome!_

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><p>Naomi was sitting in the wardroom of the Port Stanley, staring down into the mug in front of her with the carefully blank expression that he knew well. Very well, having seen it on a dozen other faces just like hers. A trained indifference to hide the turmoil beneath. Mendez couldn't imagine how Naomi felt at the moment, and he almost felt guilty. Almost, because there wasn't a lot that guilt could fix. It only made things worse. Mendez wondered if it was worth offering an apology.

Probably not. It wouldn't mean much coming from him, and even if it did, it wouldn't even begin to cover half the shit that she'd been put through. And for what? He'd fooled himself into thinking it to be for the good of humanity, to turn the tide of the war. What a bunch of _bullshit._ He'd played around with things that shouldn't have been played with, and he was paying for it.

Someone coughed behind him and Mendez turned, blinking at the ODS that stood there, watching him blankly. Idly, Mendez wondered if he'd been so out of it that he hadn't heard him approach, or if he was

getting senile in his age. The ODST stared at him for a moment longer before slipping past him. It was only after he'd entered the wardroom that Mendez remembered his name. _Vaz, wasn't it?_ There was a scar that ran down the length of Vaz's jaw, and Mendez wondered how he could've forgotten something like that in so little time. _Damn, I really am getting old._

Vaz seemed to be pointedly ignoring him, moving and preparing a fresh pot of coffee. He approached Naomi, placing a hand on her shoulder and leaning in to whisper in her ear, ice-blue eyes flicking towards Mendez and narrowing. Mendez wondered if Vaz knew what he'd done. He probably did, and that was the reason for the hatred that flared in his gaze and the protective hand on Naomi's shoulder.

Mendez suddenly found himself under the scrutiny of another pair of eyes, though they belonged to Naomi. Pale grey in color, they, along with her platinum blonde hair and pale skin, leant her the appearance of a ghost. A ghost who was silently observing him in that quiet, analytical way that all Spartans seemed to share. Mendez lingered in the doorway of the wardroom for a moment longer before he stepped forward.

"Leave." It was Vaz, not Naomi, who spoke, tone frosty despite the heavy accent. The Russian glared now, lifting his hand from Naomi's shoulder to fold his arms across his chest. Mendez had never worked with ODSTs, and despite his lack of enhancements of any kind, Vaz still managed to cut an intimidating figure in fatigues. It was the scar, Mendez decided. The scar and the hard, sharp planes of his face that leant him the air of intimidation. "You don't have any right to talk to her."

You're right, Mendez thought. _I don't._

He didn't budge. Vaz's eyes narrowed further, fingers of his right hand twitching as though he longed to reach for the side-arm at his waist and pop a couple of rounds into Mendez. "I saidâ€"

"It's okay." Naomi spoke up, tone quiet. She wasn't looking at Mendez now, her attention focused upon Vaz. "It's alright, Vasya. He can stay." Vaz turned to her, anger dying. The stiff set of his shoulders, however, said that he wasn't ready to let it go. "I'll be fine."

Vaz unfolded his arms and clapped Naomi on the shoulder, squeezing gently. "Let me know if you need me," he told her before striding towards Mendez, his eyes narrowing upon him before he disappeared. Mendez waited a heartbeat longer before approaching the table and taking a seat. Naomi's eyes flicked over him before returning to her mug.

Mendez struggled to find something to say to her. Naomi, however, seemed to take it upon herself to start. "Is it true, sir?" The question startled him, and his eyes locked with grey. "Is John..." She trailed off. John. Master Chief, one of the best Spartans they'd ever had. The best of the best, and part of the closest thing that Naomi had to a family.

Mendez didn't know what to say. They'd never found a body â€" it could be taken two ways. Either John was alive, or he was dead. And as much as Mendez wanted to believe the former, he knew that life was

never so kind. Naomi seemed to take his silence for what it was and turned back to her coffee, her expression that of quiet misery.

Christ, can't I think of something to say? Poor kid. Mendez wanted to offer some sort of comfort, but he wasn't sure how to give it. Instead, he found himself studying her. She was not as young as Lucy, Ash or Mark, but there was still an edge of youth to her face and without the bulky MJOLNIR armor, she didn't have much in the way of muscle. If Mendez didn't know better, he would've thought her to be just an awkwardly tall girl. But he did know better. He struggled for words. He wanted to say something, anything, to help ease a little bit of that misery. "He's still MIA."

Already, he wished that he hadn't said it. MIA was just a fancy way of skirting around the truth, because UNSC could not let the public know that the soldiers they put so much faith into were fallible. That they weren't immortal.

Naomi didn't look at him, and stared at her coffee mug as she replied, "Spartans never die. They just go MIA."

Mendez wished that he could say something else, something to cheer her up. But the words wouldn't form. The room fell into silence until at last, Mendez finally found something to say, though he wished it was more. "I'm sorry."

End
file.